

A PERSONAL HISTORY
WORLD WAR II

KARL F. EICHHORN, JR.
CORPORAL - ARMAMENT
726th SQUADRON
451st BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
U.S. 15th AIR FORCE

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ERRATA

Since I first printed this history I have found a few errors which should be corrected. They are listed below by page and paragraph number.

- Page 34, ¶ 2: The expression, "Ford River Rouge Plant" should be corrected to read: Ford Willow Run Plant.
- Page 48, ¶ 2: The exploit of A/C 636 - "Three Feathers" - as I related it in this paragraph, was as I remembered it, told to me verbally (probably third hand!) in early 1944. In 1988 I received a copy of a letter from Lt. Col. Charles Morfit (USAF retired), who was Co-pilot on that flight. The following corrections should be made, based on his first hand experience:

The loss of three engines occurred on the first leg of the flight from West Palm Beach over the Caribbean Sea near the Windward Islands, **NOT** over the Atlantic between South America and Africa, as stated. The only engine which was functioning normally was the number one engine. Finally, the emergency landing was made, NOT at Ascension Island, but at St. Lucia Island. The other details are correct as stated.

- Page 49, ¶ 3: The reference to the 49 th Bomb Wing here is incorrect. When the 451 st Bomb Group first went into combat in January 1944 it was assigned to an existing Heavy Bombardment Wing, the 47 th. The other Groups in this Wing at the time were the 98 th, the 376 th, the 449 th and the 450 th. In April 1944, when the 451 st Bomb Group was moved to its new and permanent base at Castelluccio, it was transferred to the newly created 49 th Wing, which also included the 461 st and 484 th Bomb Groups.
- Page 59, ¶ 7: The name of the Italian village referred to is correctly spelled with one "c", i.e. Castelluccio.
- Page 68, ¶ 2: Since writing about this incident, I have been advised by our former ordnance sergeant, Art Gallagher, that the men killed in this explosion were not G.I.'s, but Italian civilians who had been hired by the Air Force to offload and transfer the bombs to trailers for movement to our airfield.

KFE -- July 1989

PROLOGUE

Since my days in high school, I have been an avid and fascinated student of history, particularly the history of those great military conflicts which have influenced the destiny of peoples and nations. Over the past three decades my interest has centered primarily on the Civil War and World War II. Though I have not neglected the first World War, I have never found it of any real interest for in-depth study. It was a senseless and unnecessary conflict, incited by narrow-minded political leaders and conducted by some of the most incompetent commanders ever assembled on one field of battle. World War I was Petersburg; World War II was Chancellorsville. Though, over the years, I have pored through hundreds of books on a wide range of historical subjects, two specific books still come to mind as close friends during my service in World War II, for I carried a hard-cover copy of each in my duffel bag when I was shipped overseas, and read each several times. They were Creasy's "Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World" and Wells' "The Outline of History".

I have often wondered what period of history I might have selected, had I been offered the option to select my own birthdate. That would be a difficult choice, indeed. To stand with the Athenians on the plain at Marathon - to sail with Drake - to have been a longbowman at Agincourt - to join a wagon-train to the West - to have experienced the North American wilderness before the white man shattered the climax forests and decimated the native peoples and wildlife - to have walked with Jackson up the Brock Road. Ah, what choices one would have! And yet, in my own lifetime of nearly three score years there have probably been more significant social, economic, and technological changes than in any other like period of history. And of these World War II was the most profound and memorable event of my life - an experience which pervades my thoughts still, after forty years.

In my studies of the Civil War and World War II I have come to realize the great importance to students and historians of the diaries and letters of the common soldiers who experienced those cataclysmic events. It is my primary purpose here to put down my own experiences as a soldier in the U.S. 15th Air Force, along with a short history of my earlier years, for continuity. It is not a story of derring-do. It was not my lot to engage a Zero or ME 109 in aerial combat - to splash ashore at Omaha Beach - to parachute behind enemy lines on an OSS errand or to command a tank in the Western Desert. Though I carried arms in a combat area, I did not directly engage in combat. Yet, of course, there were millions like me, common soldiers and seamen who did their duty in whatever capacity they were assigned and wherever they were sent. I would guess that the vast majority of servicemen who saw service during the War never had occasion to fire a weapon in anger, but each man's contribution, however small, was part of the whole. This is the story of one man's War, as recorded in his day-by-day journal. It is my hope that it will prove interesting, even helpful perhaps, to some future historian or other interested reader.

THE EARLY YEARS

It must have been a difficult decision for my Mother. At the age of 26 she was a Principal of three elementary school buildings in Bedford, Ohio. But as she told me many years later, she had fallen in love with my Father's dark, curly hair. At 31 he had worked his way through the College of Agriculture at Ohio State University and was then employed as the manager of the poultry branch of Circle W Farms in Gates Mills, Ohio. The estate was owned by Mrs. Walter White, widow of the founder of the White Motor Car Co. My parents were married in August of 1923 and I was their first-born on 4 June of the following year. To complete our family, my sister, Barbara, drew her first breath in October of 1927.

Soon after, my Father left his job at the White estate and moved the family to Barnesville, in southeastern Ohio, where he had purchased the old family farm from his parents. There he built, largely with his own hands, a hatchery and started his own business, doing custom hatching for local farmers and selling poultry and eggs. It was a hard life of generally heavy manual work with little monetary return. But in those days a family could just get by on a small farm by living frugally, bartering with neighbors and "making do". I entered the public school in Barnesville in 1930. Two years later, as the Great Depression closed about us, and farm incomes fell precipitously, Mrs. White contacted Father and asked him to return to manage her poultry operation once again. It was an opportunity which could not be ignored and we moved back to Gates Mills where Barbara and I entered the school at Chesterland.

Though it is difficult to dredge up memories of very early years, I remember 1932 well, especially the first election of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the conflict of opinion during the campaign. I can still remember sitting around our small Crosley table radio to listen to his speeches. It was a time of great changes and hopes for the future.

The first radio I remember from the late twenties was powered by a lead-acid car battery and had three large tuning knobs on the front, and no dial. Tuning was largely a matter of chance, as one had to rotate all three knobs back and forth until a station came through on the headphones. Once you identified the station's call letters you wrote down the settings of the three knobs so that it could be tuned more readily the next time. The cars I remember from those days were mostly Ford Model T's, though the first car we owned was an Overland of uncertain vintage. Father bought a new Chevrolet in 1927 which he drove for the next ten years - it had spoked wheels and was framed with wood.

In the early thirties life tended to be a little primitive in the rural areas - outhouses were common and many homes still used kerosene lamps and coal stoves. We were always fortunate to have indoor plumbing and electricity, but our kitchen stove used kerosene and the furnace burned coal. During the winter, when the furnace was operating, we always had lots of hot water, since there were heating

coils connected into the furnace. Otherwise water had to be heated on the kitchen stove for washing dishes and similar tasks, or by firing up a separate coal-burning cast iron stove which heated an auxiliary water coil. Father generally ran that stove only once a week - to heat water for the Saturday-night baths.

Until the mid-thirties, when we bought our first refrigerator, we used an ice-box in the kitchen. Ice was delivered daily, as was bread and milk, the latter in glass quart bottles. We had cardboard signs to place in the living room window to advise deliverymen of our needs. The ice sign was a square, with numbers in each corner, and was oriented in the window to tell whether we needed 25, 50, 75 or 100 pounds of ice. In winter the non-homogenized milk often started to freeze before we brought it inside, and Mother would often treat me with a couple spoonfuls of frozen cream. For years bread was delivered unsliced and I can still recall my mother's squeal of surprise and joy when she opened her first loaf of pre-sliced bread. Most of the time staple groceries were ordered by phone. The grocer would jot down the list, assemble the items and deliver them to our door a couple hours later - no delivery charge, of course. Whatever meat we had, other than chicken, was purchased at a meat market, usually on Saturday.

The depression was a very difficult period for many people. We were somewhat better off than most, as Father was employed at Circle W Farms for most of the period. As I recall, he was paid about \$ 75.00 a month, and our cottage and utilities were provided at no cost. Entertainment was pretty much limited to movies, radio, regular Sunday-afternoon drives and occasional picnics. Father loved to fish and we would often go to a local stream to fish for bullheads, when he could spare the time. If there was a little money left at the end of the month Mother would take us to a matinee movie at one of the grand theaters in downtown Cleveland. Even if the movie wasn't memorable, those theaters, with plush carpets and wall hangings, uniformed ushers, deep, comfortable seats and beautiful illumination, were a treat still fondly remembered after all these years. Those were the great days before popcorn and rude, noisy patrons. My Uncle Bill - Mother's older brother - was a professional baseball player in his younger days and sometimes took me to see the Cleveland Indians play at the old League Park. I still remember seeing Babe Ruth play one of his last games during an All Star game in the early thirties. We saw many of the old-time greats, such as Lefty Gomez, Lefty Grove, Lou Gehrig, and Dizzy & Daffy Dean.

Overall, my memories of growing up in the thirties are generally pleasant, in spite of the depression. While we had very little money, we always had a place to live and adequate food on the table. We had friends who weren't so fortunate, and I can remember Mother taking soup or stew to the home of close friends, on the pretext of a social visit, because she knew they really were hungry much of the time. It was a period when people helped friends and neighbors, when no one locked the front door when they left home and when city streets were safe, even at night.

I suppose my most painful memory goes back to the winter of '32. I was somewhat frail as a boy and had more than my share of ear and throat infections. That winter I developed a severe inner ear infection in my right ear. Since there were no anti-biotics, the only treatment our doctor could offer was to lance my eardrum periodically to encourage drainage. After all these years I still cringe a bit to think about the pain. Nothing seemed to help and after I developed a high, constant fever a specialist was consulted. My parents were shocked to learn that without an immediate mastoid operation I could not be expected to live more than another week or so. I was sent to a hospital in Cleveland where an ENT surgeon, Dr. Pitkin, operated the next day. The operation was successful and clearly I owe my life to that surgeon. My recovery was slow and often painful, especially when dressings and drainage tubes were changed. Overall, I missed about four months of school, and though I was a good student, the school Principal felt it best that I repeat the third grade. This put me a year behind in school and was to have a significant effect later on.

By the mid-thirties I had developed what has become a lifelong interest in aviation and aircraft. I experienced the joy of attending the Cleveland Air Races several times and one of my fondest memories is of Jimmie Doolittle winning the Thompson Trophy in the magnificent, but deadly Gee-Bee R-1 in the fall of '32. My heroes were the great race and barnstorming pilots of those years - Doolittle, Roscoe Turner, Wiley Post, Amelia Earhart, Bennie Howard, and many others. I truly feel sorry for boys growing up today. There are no more heroes, only rock bums and junkies. I constructed many beautiful scale and flying model planes from elaborate balsa and bamboo paper kits - there was no plastic junk to simply fit together then. Model building taught patience, skill and real craftsmanship.

By 1937 our old Chevrolet was becoming a bit creaky and Mother quietly initiated a "We really need a new car" campaign. One day on the way back from a shopping trip to South Euclid she stopped at the Chevy dealership to pick up some advertising folders. The new model Chevrolet was now available in colors other than basic black. One could also order a car in either Desert Tan or Gunmetal Gray. I recall that the advertising brochure showed a new Chevy parked on a dock with a Navy battleship moored impressively in the background - both, of course, painted "Battleship Gray". Wow! That was for me! Though only thirteen, my father had already taught me to drive the '27 Chevy and I drove it regularly around the farm on errands by myself. Since we had just bought our first refrigerator and a new GE radio the previous year, Father was not at all enthusiastic about taking on payments for a new car just then. I don't know whether Mother arranged it or just how it transpired, but one Saturday a salesman from the agency drove into our yard with a new demonstrator Chevy. It was truly a buyer's market then and his offer was to let us use the car for one whole week at no charge and under no obligation. It was too good an offer to turn down, but Father lost the battle as soon as he allowed the salesman to leave the car. After a week of enjoying the ride and new smell of that demonstrator, Father was on the losing side of a three-to-one vote. Shortly thereafter the dealer delivered to our house a new Gunmetal Gray Standard 1937 Chevrolet. It was our pride and joy and served our family faithfully for the next fifteen years -

good value for the cost, which was on the order of five or six hundred dollars, as I recall.

The G.E. radio, mentioned above, also resides in a firm niche in my memory. It was on sale at the May Company in Cleveland and since our old Crosley was in a state of constant intermittency, Mother could not resist buying the new radio, even though she had not discussed it with Father. That fact caused some dissent when it was delivered to our home one day, but again Father had lost the skirmish. The G.E. was a glorious console model with five tuning bands, including, to my delight, most of the international short wave frequencies. Father and I spent many hours on Friday and Saturday nights tuning in London, Paris, Berlin and other exotic stations.

How could anyone who experienced it forget the "Golden Age" of radio in the thirties? I often ate my supper from a tray by the radio so that I would not miss "Jimmie Allen", an aviation adventure series broadcast from Cleveland. Then there were the early "soaps" such as Ma Perkins, Just Plain Bill and David Harum, followed in the evening by programs like First Nighter, The Green Hornet, The Shadow, and Suspense. One can never forget the great comedy shows - Jack Benny, Amos 'n Andy, Lum 'n Abner, Charlie McCarthy, Burns and Allen and my favorite, Fred Allen. Sometimes I think television has yet to equal radio at its best. By the late thirties, as events in Europe became increasingly grim, I took greater and greater interest in international affairs. Father and I seldom missed the evening news broadcasts by Lowell Thomas, Boake Carter, Walter Winchell and our hands-down favorite, H.V. Kaltenborn.

During the winter of '37/38 Dad came down with a strep throat and badly infected tonsils. A Doctor who treated him lanced his tonsils but cut too deeply on one without realizing it. Father apparently bled all night and by the next morning he was almost unconscious from the infection and loss of blood. An ambulance was called to take him to a hospital in Cleveland. I can still see his almost white face as they wheeled the stretcher out of the house. He reached to pat my head but there was no strength in his hand as I held it in mine on the way to the ambulance. As they left I could not but feel that I might never see my Father again. He was placed under the care of the same surgeon, Dr. Pitkin, who had operated on me five years previously. Somehow, with transfusions and emergency care Father pulled through and returned home to recuperate. Then another blow struck our family.

One day while Father was still recovering, Mrs. White's business manager, a Mrs. Reilly, came to see him to tell him that they had decided to close down the Circle W poultry operation to save overhead and that they were giving him thirty days notice of lay-off. To this day I am not sure of all the circumstances which brought this about. Dad had never really liked working for someone else. He always wanted to be back on the family farm, working for himself, in spite of our generally good circumstances at Circle W Farm. Mother was in strong disagreement with his viewpoint and the worst arguments I can recall them having were on this very important issue. In addition, Father, and indeed most of the other workers on the estate, disliked Mrs. Reilly intensely. He called her Mrs. White's

"hatchet-woman". I suspect there may have been words between them from time to time, as Father could be pretty outspoken when he was angry. And so, I have always felt that there may have been something more personal than simply overhead involved in Father's loss of work.

It was a serious matter for us - Father was still not fully recovered, we had no money saved up and were still paying for the new car. I have never known all the details, as we kids were sheltered from the financial problems. I am sure Mother's older sister, Esther, who was a public health nurse in Cleveland, and my favorite Aunt, probably helped with the immediate expenses. There was really no place for us to go. When we had left the farm near Barnesville, Dad had let his Sister and Brother-in-Law move into the house and operate the hatchery. It would take some time for them to find another home and work and in the meantime we had to vacate our cottage on the estate. At that time my Mother's eldest sister, Nina, offered to share her rented house in DeLand, Florida with us. She was a widow living there with her son and daughter who were students at Stetson University. They were well off financially, as the result of selling off large land holdings near Cleveland after Aunt Nina's husband had died many years previously. However, they had a relatively small rented house and it was no small thing to share it with a family of four and pay most of the bills for nearly eight months.

Thus, as soon as we could make all the arrangements, our furniture, including the precious new refrigerator and radio, was placed in storage in South Euclid, the Chevy was loaded with all we could take in the line of clothing and personal items, and we headed south in early 1938. I believe it took four or five days to drive to DeLand. In those days travelers stayed either at tourist homes or in tourist cottages. A night in a tourist home cost about \$ 2.50 or \$ 3.00, while the cottages cost \$ 4.00 or \$ 5.00 a night. Though economy was a primary consideration, under the circumstances, Father elected to stay at the tourist cottages simply because we all enjoyed them much more. Also, by cooking breakfast and supper in the cottage, we saved the cost of restaurant meals. The weather was cold most of the way and the cottages were heated either by gas or by wood-burning, pot-bellied stoves. One of these almost caused our undoing in a cottage in Georgia. Outside was a nice pile of pre-cut firewood along with a pile of split Georgia "fat wood", intended to be used as kindling. Father, having never seen it before, filled the stove with the fat wood and lit it. The cottage began to heat up nicely to relieve the chill air. But the heat increased and increased and soon, to our dismay, the smoke pipe and entire stove began to glow. The whole thing got cherry-red, in spite of closing the draft. Mother frantically moved our suitcases and the furniture away from the runaway stove. Windows and doors were opened to let in cold air and a desperate attempt to cool off the stove with a cup of water only resulted in an explosive burst of steam. Dad rushed Barb and me outside and was about to look for a fire extinguisher when it appeared that the smoke pipe was losing some of its awesome glow. Finally, the stove cooled off without any serious damage, but the experience became a family legend.

On the way south Father drove down part of the newly opened Blue Ridge Parkway, which at that time was not paved. The views were spectacular

but Mother was in a constant state of fear because of the steep drop-offs and the almost total lack of any sort of guard rails. All in all, it was an enjoyable trip which still brings back fond memories. It was a new experience for Mother and Dad as we had never been able to travel much. Neither had ever been to Florida, though Barbara and I had each made a trip there by train in prior summers with Esther, on two-week vacation trips to visit Aunt Nina and our cousins when they lived at Sarasota.

After we arrived at my Aunt's home in DeLand and got settled in, Barb and I were entered in the DeLand school to finish out the year - she the sixth grade and I the seventh. I still remember those DeLand kids as the most friendly and considerate of any school I ever attended. They accepted this strange Yankee kid without reservation and I soon found myself pitching on the class soft-ball team. During the first half of the school year at Chesterland, I had been placed on a special accelerated program so that I would be able to skip the eighth year and enter high school in the fall of '38, to make up the year lost by illness. Unfortunately, this move to DeLand ruined those plans, as the DeLand school Principal would not accept the advanced program I was on, even though I finished the year with straight A's.

Father quickly recuperated from his illness in Florida and he and Mother had a fine time during our stay. They often went fishing on the St. Johns River which at that time was a very quiet and peaceful place with no screaming power boats or water skiers. The days passed quickly and before we knew it the time had come when we had to return to Ohio. Dad took advantage of being in Florida to make a grand tour of the state on our way home. We drove down the east coast via U.S. 1 which was a two-lane road, still unpaved in some places. At Cocoa Father decided to take us to a Coast Guard Station which the map showed was located at a place called Cape Canaveral. We drove across a rickety old wood bridge, to what I now assume was Merritt Island, where Father apparently got off the main dirt road onto a sand lane. Soon the Chevy was solidly stuck in the sand. By putting dead wood and palm fronds under the rear tires and with Mother at the wheel and Father and I pushing we finally got the car back onto more solid ground. That was enough! It was very hot and we were being eaten alive by hordes of hungry mosquitoes, so we returned to the mainland without ever seeing the Cape. Little did I realize that one day long in the future I would be supervising the launching of military missiles from those remote and forbidding sands!

We continued south, past Miami, on to the Florida Keys via the famous overseas highway. It was all very wild and remote then and tourist accommodations were infrequent and rather primitive. On the way back, when it was time to stop for the evening, there was simply nothing available. We drove and drove until long past dark, with Mother becoming more and more anxious, before we finally found a tourist cottage somewhere south of Miami. I can still remember that dark, deserted night on the Keys highway - there were no other cars on the road and there was not a light to be seen anywhere in front or behind us. It was as though we were suspended in a dark void.

Our return route took us across the Tamiami Trail and up the west coast of Florida. Except for the cities, it was a wild and remote country and we took care to always have enough gasoline and water with us. I do not know what our exact route was but we saw a lot of Florida including some of the attractions like Silver Springs. We returned to Barnesville, Ohio in late August and moved back into the old Eichhorn family house after our furniture was delivered from Cleveland.

In September Barbara and I were back in Jr. High School in Barnesville and Father was again operating the hatchery. The class I had first started school with was now a year ahead of me. Barnesville was a small country town of about 5000 and the school system served a large rural area. There were city kids and country kids and somehow I didn't fit in with either group. We lived five miles outside of town with no close neighbors, so I had no close friends from that time until I entered the Army four and one-half years later. After my ear operation, the Doctor had told my Mother that I could never engage in any hard contact sports such as football or basketball. It was just as well, since I've never liked any team sports anyway. I therefore concentrated on my studies and my hobbies. I continued to build and fly model airplanes and added photography as a hobby, which would become my main recreational interest in the years ahead. I set up a spare room on the second floor as my darkroom and taught myself to develop and print pictures taken with the simple box camera I had acquired somewhere along the way. I wanted a better camera in the worst way but there was no money for such frivolous things. Longingly I read ads for Leicas and Contaxes in Popular Photography, knowing, of course, they were only for the rich. But in the late thirties there was a camera that was often called the poor man's Leica - it was the American-made Argus - and I thought that someday I might somehow accumulate the \$ 15.00 price of the cheapest model. It was my secret dream of 1938.

The Ohio Department of Education required that every eighth year student take a general intelligence test prior to graduating and entering High School. The purpose of the test was to evaluate the performance of all public and private schools in the state against the same standard. Test results were compared overall on a state level, as well as by school classification, as determined by enrollment. As in team sports, Barnesville was in informal competition with a rival nearby school in Woodsfield. In my class the teacher had taken an interest in a boy, whose name I have forgotten, and was convinced that he would attain a higher score than any student at Woodsfield, as she often informed the rest of the class. To hedge her hopes, she began giving the boy special tutoring after school several weeks before the test was given in April 1939. Though I was getting A's in all my subjects, I really didn't give the test much thought and made no real effort to study for it. When the scores were announced by the state no one was more surprised than I when it turned out that I had placed first in the entire state, with more than 45,000 students taking the test. My parents, my classmates, my teacher and the Principal were really just flabbergasted. I did not think the test overly difficult when I took it, but I didn't really expect to make 192 points out of a possible 200. As the state winner I was asked to attend the awards ceremony in Columbus, which would be attended by the State Superintendent of Schools, the head of the Department of Education and the

Governor of the state. It was a heady experience for a fourteen-year-old kid. Where they got the money, I will never know, but my folks somehow managed to buy me a new suit (which would also serve for my eighth grade graduation), have my portrait taken for the papers and the state awards program and, to my great surprise and delight, they gave me, as a special gift, a new Argus camera. Not the \$ 15.00 Model A I had been drooling over, but the top-of-the-line C-2 which cost \$ 25.00, plus another \$ 5.00 for the all-leather case. Today, that doesn't seem like much, but in '39 it was probably a rather large chunk of my parents' "rainy day" savings. In the photographs taken of me at the awards ceremony, and even while I was giving the required short acceptance speech, I was proudly wearing that new camera around my neck. I still have the camera and it remains one of my precious possessions - a reminder of days long gone.

Sometime before the end of the school year Warren Davis, the Jr. High Principal, came to visit my Folks one evening. After a while I was sent to bed, but I rather expected Mr. Davis had come for some reason other than a social visit so, uncharacteristically, and without the knowledge of my parents, I sat at the head of the stairs to eavesdrop. It turned out I was right. His purpose was to suggest to my parents that my time was being wasted in a school system which was clearly geared to the average "C" student. He strongly recommended that I be sent to a special private school for gifted students and he had even prepared a list of several such schools with a summary of their ratings. It was, of course, a mission without hope. There was no way Father could come up with the tuition for such a school, much as he may have wished to do so. When it was clear that nothing along these lines could be done, Mr. Davis and Father engaged in a long discussion of current events, particularly the ominous news from Europe. It was, of course, a subject of much interest to me and I continued to listen to the discussion, since I had not been discovered. I have often wondered at the prescience of this small-town Principal. He told of his conviction that another world war would break out in Europe, probably within a few months and that after Britain, France and Germany had once again beaten each other to a stalemate, "Uncle Joe" (meaning Stalin) would very likely gobble up much of Europe. I always respected and admired Warren Davis and have often wondered what became of him in the years since. It was he who first introduced me to Bohr's theory of the atom, when he loaned me his college physics text to study in my spare time after school.

Looking back on my three and one half years in Barnesville High School I would say it was one of the loneliest periods of my life. Though I was elected President of our Freshman class, it was a case of knowing I would do a good job, rather than a matter of popularity. I continued to receive high grades and other scholastic honors, but athletic prowess, not academic achievement, paved the way to popularity at Barnesville High. I did, however enjoy being on the Debate Team and serving on the staff of the school newspaper and yearbook, as writer, artist and photographer. I never learned to dance, did not date in High School and was never invited to any of the city kids' parties. I had no really close friends. I devoted myself to studies, hobbies and

helping Dad with the many chores on the farm. Always essentially introverted, I gradually became something of a "loner", which, to a certain extent, I still am. But, thankfully, our's was a close-knit, happy family, with love enough for all. There were never any teen-age problems or serious growing pains to bring Mother and Father any grief. In retrospect, even though I experienced some unhappy times in my teen-age years, I am thankful that I grew up in a rural environment in the thirties, rather than in an urban environment anytime in the past three decades. Life was simpler and, I think, more fulfilling in those days.

THE WAR COMES

No one who had even casually followed international events over the previous three or four years could possibly have been surprised by the Allied declaration of war on 3 September 1939. In truth, this new war had been coming since the Treaty of Versailles. Very quickly I became almost mesmerized by these events of history unfolding before my eyes. I almost never missed the morning and evening news broadcasts. We listened as Poland fell and wondered why the British and French failed to help. We had no way of knowing how weak the major Allies were, compared with Germany, at that time. The strange interlude of the "Phoney War" was puzzling until it was broken by the German invasion of Denmark and Norway in early April 1940, followed a month later by the incredible conquest of France and the Low Countries.

I recall clearly that it was sometime in 1940, perhaps after Dunkirk or during the Battle of Britain, that I became convinced in my own mind that we should become involved in the war on the side of Britain. My reading of history indicated that the United States, by its acquiescence in the Treaty of Versailles and by its almost total lack of interest in European problems during the preceding twenty years, almost certainly had to share some of the responsibility for the calamity of World War II. I remember discussing it with Dad after news broadcasts or while we sat on the lawn to rest after working. Early in the War he did not agree with me. Father felt, as did most Americans at that time, that it was Europe's war and we should never become involved. Isolationism was very strong but I could never bring myself to accept that concept.

During the final months of 1941 it should have become obvious to any reasonably alert person that we were very close to involvement in a shooting war. Actually, we were already in a de facto war with German submarines in the North Atlantic. But the most threatening situation lay far to the west, in the Pacific. War with Japan was clearly imminent and some sort of attack in Southeast Asia, possibly the Philippines, seemed most probable. When the blow fell on 7 December the shock was not caused so much by the actual attack as by the initial target selected - Pearl Harbor. It seemed to me almost inconceivable that the Japanese Navy could have the ability and the power to hit our main Pacific Fleet base. I doubt that anyone who experienced that day can ever forget what he/she was doing when news first came of the attack. That Sunday morning I had walked to town to attend a short meeting of leaders of the local Boy Scout Troop, since I was then serving as Leader of a Cub Scout Den. As usually happened, the meeting ran late and wasn't over until after 1400. I was returning home (it was a five mile walk) in rather a hurry, since I knew Mother would be saving lunch for me. Along the way I passed a man going in the opposite direction and as he passed he called out, "The Japs have bombed us!" I asked what he was talking about and he said someone else had told him and that was all he knew. At that point I was still about a mile and a half from home but I started running and never stopped until I reached the house, nearly exhausted. I asked Mother what had happened but she had no knowledge of any attack, as the radio had not

been on since early morning. It was already nearly 1430 when I turned the radio on. It was true! Scattered and often confusing reports were coming in from Washington. From that very first news report, I started writing a continuing log of radio news reports of the War which I continued without interruption until the day I was inducted into the Army. As I write this in the summer of 1983, I still have all of those carefully hand-written notes of the early days of our involvement in World War II. On 7 December I made 21 separate entries, the first at 1425 - "Jap Naval planes bombed Pearl Harbor, Honolulu and Manila", and the last at 0107 (Monday), "Nicaragua and Panama declared war shortly after Costa Rica". Even now, as I look at these hundreds of laboriously written pages, I am still amazed that at the age of seventeen I had the interest and determination to keep such a log.

It was painful to accept what was clearly a severe defeat at Pearl Harbor. Within a few weeks it was obvious that Genda's brilliant planning, coupled with Fuchida's execution thereof, had hurt us far more than we were at first led to believe by the Government. Had Genda given higher priority to bombing the petroleum tank farms and the dry docks at Pearl and had Nagumo launched the second-strike air attack which Fuchida urged, we would have been in far worse circumstances. But, of course, this is hindsight and at the time there was more than enough destruction to contemplate. The early weeks of 1942 brought continued bad news, one defeat or withdrawal followed by another. It was terribly agonizing to realize that our Navy, which most Americans held in the highest regard (probably because of effective Navy propaganda), was suddenly too weak to relieve the troops in the Philippines and that our Government would simply abandon our forces on Bataan and Corregidor. Not until the Battle of the Coral Sea could one again enjoy the feeling of a degree of confidence. It would be very difficult to exaggerate the excitement I felt after the great Battle of Midway, our first truly unqualified victory in the Pacific. On that day in June it was clear that we were on the way back, at whatever cost and however long it might take.

During this, my Junior year in High School, my photography hobby began to pay off a bit. I took a part-time job, after school and on Saturdays, working at the Lappert Studio, the only photo studio and shop in Barnesville. In addition to working in the retail store, I did most of the amateur photofinishing, developing films and making prints. My employer quickly gained confidence in my ability and I worked pretty much on my own. For a work week that ranged from 20 to 30 hours I was paid the magnificent sum of \$ 3.00 per week to start. By mid-winter I was making \$ 8.00 per week and I recall receiving a \$ 5.00 bonus for Christmas! Little as it was, I did have spending money for the first time in my life, since Barb and I never received allowances.

I turned 18 on my birthday in June and immediately registered with Selective Service. I was, of course, exempt from the draft as long as I was in school. This, however, was not really a matter of comfort to me, for by now I was almost obsessed with the idea of entering the Service to do what I sincerely regarded as my duty. The classmates I had started first grade with were now entering military service and I began to curse the fact that I was a year behind in school. It seemed likely to me that if, in the normal course of events, I entered the

Service in the summer of '43, and allowing for perhaps a year of training, the war might well be over before I could do my part. I could never understand those who would try anything to delay or avoid service (and there were many) because I would never have entertained such a thought.

During the summer and fall of 1942 we followed with fascination the see-saw battle in North Africa between the Afrika Korps and the Eighth Army. Though he was on the other side, Rommel became something of a hero to me, and I still retain the highest regard for him. In my view he represented all that was honorable and soldierly in the German Wehrmacht. He was, without question, one of the great Captains of history and in World War II I would rank him right at the top, equalled or exceeded in ability only by MacArthur.

As my Senior year progressed, I began to make plans for enlisting in the Service. My diary records that on 16 December I went to see Donald Shepherd, our High School Principal, and Silas Warfield, our Superintendent of Schools, to ascertain if I could still get my diploma if I enlisted following mid-term exams after the first of the year. I was enrolled in the college preparatory course and had taken a greater than normal course load each year. Both Mr. Shepherd and Mr. Warfield tried to dissuade me from leaving before the end of the school year, but both agreed that by the time I had finished the first half of my Senior year I would have completed more than enough course work to receive my diploma.

I had cleared the first hurdle and now I had to get my parents' permission. I can find no mention of discussing this with Mother and Dad in my '42 diary and I no longer recall the details. I do not remember it as difficult or painful because both Mother and Father were perfectly aware that I was only counting the days until I could go into the Service. I was not happy in high school and I was bored with classes which offered me no real challenge. They both realized that I would be drafted shortly after graduating, and though I know they wanted to keep me with them as long as possible, they respected my wishes and gave the permission I needed to enlist. Actually by this time in the War the Government had eliminated enlistments, as such, and required that those who wanted to enter the armed forces voluntarily would have to do so within the Selective Service system. That is, one would simply volunteer that his name be placed at the top of the list of men covered by the next draft call.

INTO THE ARMY

On 4 January 1943 I recorded in my diary, "Saw Bennett tonight about enlisting." I do not recall who "Bennett" was but assume he was head of the local Selective Service Office. I took my mid-term examinations on 21-22 January and thus had burned the last bridge behind me. On the 13th of February I reported to the local Draft Board at 0715, was sworn in as a Private in the Army of the United States, and with other volunteers and draftees entered one of three chartered buses which took us to Columbus for our induction physicals. The exam took about 90 minutes and I sweated it out until I was told that I had passed. My only real concern was my myopia, which I already knew would prevent me from entering the flight training that I wanted above all else. We returned home the same night and I continued with school and my part-time work at the studio until the day before I actually left home for Service.

My cousin, Marguerite Libbey, came down from Cleveland to visit a couple days before I was to leave for the Army. On 19 February I put in my last appearance at school and said goodbye to Lapperts at the studio. That afternoon I cleaned up my room for the last time and packed some clothing and personal items in a suitcase. We had been told that each man could carry one suitcase with him to the induction center at Fort Hayes in Columbus. That evening we had sort of a going away party at home. I took a number of flash photos and received several little gifts from Mother, Dad and Barb. I recall that I did not sleep well that night - troubled, I suppose, by the sort of thoughts any eighteen-year-old would have when leaving home for the Army in time of war, with the future as uncertain as anything can be.

I was scheduled to leave Barnesville via train at noon on 20 February for Fort Hayes in Columbus. My biggest concern that morning was for Mother - I was sure she would break down at the station as I left. I had planned to say goodbye at the house and walk to the train station but, of course, Mother and Dad would have none of that. There was a large group of young men leaving that day - a Saturday - and the depot was crowded with inductees, relatives and friends. As we were called to board and were saying our last goodbyes, I was amazed to see that my Mother's eyes were dry, and even more amazed to see tears streaming down my Father's face. It was not until several years later that Father told me Mother had wept all night in bed before I left, but, determined not to have me see her cry at the station, she had shed her last tear that day before breakfast.

The train arrived in Columbus at 1500 where we were loaded on trucks for the short trip to Fort Hayes. There we were registered, subjected to a minor physical and marched to a barracks where we were issued two wool blankets, two sheets and a pillow case. Later, we had our first Army meal (not as bad as many of us expected) in a large mess hall and then returned to our barracks. Lights out was at 2100 and my Army life and my War had begun.

Fort Hayes served solely as a reception center where inductees were issued uniforms, run through preliminary processing, classified and then sent to basic training bases. On my second day in the Army we were roused out by bugle call at 0330 then simply waited around until 0600 when we were marched to breakfast. We had been introduced to the ancient Army operation known as "hurry up and wait". We then went to clothing issue where each man received two heavy cotton barracks bags, two sets of underwear, three pair of socks, a pair of G.I. boots, two Class A wool uniforms (O.D.'s), overcoat, blouse, field jacket, belt, two sets of fatigues, fatigue hat, and a pair of canvas leggings. Next we signed up for G.I. insurance and then took the Army Classification Tests.

These tests included three basic sections, each having 140 questions. The first part consisted mainly of simple math and vocabulary, the second was a mechanical aptitude test and the third was a radio code aptitude test. I did very well on the first two, getting 134 on each, but only got a 97 on the radio test.

The following day we had our classification interviews. Each man was quizzed by three officers who asked a variety of questions about education, experience and personal preferences. I requested that I be assigned to Air Corps ground crew. The air arm had always been organized as a corps in the Army, much like the Signal Corps and the Medical Corps, but by 1943 it had been re-designated as the U.S. Army Air Force. Nevertheless, from force of habit it was still frequently referred to as the Air Corps. After the interviews we had our first "shots". This was something I did not look forward to, and it did not help to have the fellows who went through first warn us about the "big square needle". These first shots were for small pox and typhoid and were not as bad as I had feared. With the rest of the day free several of us went to town to mail our suitcases and civilian clothing home.

The following day a group of us were introduced to that timeless Army custom, kitchen police, more familiarly known as K.P. We were awakened at 0330 and worked almost steadily in the main mess hall until 2100, a very long day of backbreaking work. The only rest we received was the half hour we had for each meal. I was so tired I was in a state of stupor by the time I hit my "sack" that night. To this day I cannot understand why the Army can't divide K.P. into two more reasonable eight or nine hour shifts.

On 24 February I found my name on the shipping orders. We turned in our bedding, packed our bags and hauled them about a quarter mile to the train station, where we entrained at noon. We had day coaches that must have been old when Teddy Roosevelt was President. They were filthy dirty inside, with hard cane seats and dirty windows which were frozen closed with years of paint and grime. There were no toilet or washing facilities. During the War the Army had an insane regulation that soldiers on shipment must wear Class A dress uniforms, instead of fatigues, which would have been far more sensible. As a consequence, after only a few hours on one of those dirty troop trains, with coal-fired steam locomotives, everyone had a dirty uniform which would have to be dry-cleaned immediately upon arrival.

A Lieutenant was in charge of the train, with a Corporal or Sergeant assigned to be responsible for each coach. The Corporal in our car was wearing Air Force issue sun glasses and had a fine tan which I knew he hadn't gotten in Ohio that winter. Thus, before the train left I was predicting to my friends that we were headed for Florida. The Army, of course, never told troops their destination because of "security" - as though a German spy would give a damn where a bunch of raw recruits were going!

The train included an Army kitchen car, which was simply a baggage car with a field kitchen and serving line installed. We ate from our mess kits and washed them in large garbage cans filled with hot wash and rinse water. Each coach was served in turn and after going through the chow line we returned to our seats to eat, provided we had been careful to not spill our meals along the way as the cars rocked and rattled down the track. There was K.P. on the train also, but I managed to escape it on this trip. After leaving Cincinnati, the train headed due south, as I had guessed. We passed through Knoxville about midnight. It was next to impossible to get any real rest on the train because of the noise and the very rough ride produced by the ancient carriages on the cars.

The second day we were in South Carolina and passed through Columbia. The train moved rather slowly and seemed to have very low priority. We always stopped at sidings to let commercial passenger trains pass and even had to make way for freights sometimes. It did not help us to digest our sorry Army chow when we watched a civilian Pullman pass with the passengers having supper in the dining car, eating on a linen tablecloth, with a colored porter waiting on them. We wondered about those slogans that "nothing is too good for our boys in uniform". We passed through Jacksonville that night and the next morning the train commander told us we were headed for St. Petersburg.

We arrived in St. Pete at 1130 (26 Feb.), detrained and were marched to a down-town restaurant which the Army had taken over to operate as a mess hall. After lunch we were marched to the Vinoy Park Hotel on the bay, which was to be our "barracks". It was a beautiful tourist hotel which the Army had simply taken over. However, on the inside the Army had stripped it of all furnishings and decorations down to the bare walls and concrete floors. The rooms were furnished with two or three double-deck bunks and one table with lamp. I was separated from my friends from home and assigned to a room with three strangers who were all rather crude types I would never have picked as roommates had I been given any choice. To make matters worse, our barracks bags had been shipped to the wrong hotel. We were issued bedding and gas masks. We were in the Air Force, as I had hoped.

St. Pete was to be my basic training center and I was to remain there for just over one month. The purpose of this facility was simply to turn a bunch of civilians into soldiers. Sgt. Grant, a regular Army Staff Sergeant was responsible for the group I was in. He was stern but also very considerate and helpful and the first thing I learned from him was that Privates do NOT salute Sergeants! I think everyone in our group liked Grant and we tried to do our best for him.

We were required to carry our gas masks at ALL times from 0500 to 1700. I assume this was one way of instilling discipline, since I doubt that there was any danger of a gas attack on St. Petersburg! One of the first things we learned was how to make beds in the Army style. The blanket had to be TIGHT and a quarter tossed in the middle of the bed had to BOUNCE, not just plop there. On the first day there Sgt. Grant marched us out to a small park where we sat down in a circle and he explained why we were there, what our duties would be and what sort of schedule we could expect. He made it clear that we would be in training EVERY day, including week-ends, with no days off until we completed basic. He then said he would answer any questions we had about the Air Force, or our training, however silly they might seem. And he did, patiently and completely. He is one person I still remember with fondness, though I never saw him again after I left St. Petersburg.

Another thing we learned very quickly was to memorize our Army Serial Numbers. I can never remember my Social Security Number but I shall remember my Army Serial Number till my last breath - 35602859. The rule was that officers' numbers began with a zero, Regular Army enlisted men's began with a one, the earlier enlistees' numbers began with a two and draftees' numbers began with a three. Since I had to actually go in under the Selective Service System, my number started with a three. For my first month or so of Service all my paper work listed my number as 35602859-V, to signify that I had volunteered. However, somewhere along the way the Air Force dropped the (-V) and from then on I was in the records just like any other draftee. That sort of bugged me and still does to this day.

Our basic training could be broken down into two categories, physical and mental. The physical training consisted of learning to march, do close-order drill, calisthenics, running, going over obstacle courses, learning the Manual of Arms and elementary Judo. We also learned how to serve on Guard Duty and to "walk our post in a military manner". Marching and drilling came rather easily to me, since it was only a matter of learning the meaning of the commands and how to execute them quickly and correctly. Most of the marching and drilling was on city streets or paved parking lots and I had a very bad time with my feet. I have flat arches and my journal is full of comments about how painful my feet were every night. I hated calisthenics but did the best I could. The obstacle courses were sort of fun except for the damned high wood walls we were supposed to get over somehow. I could never master that and sometimes I would slip around the outside when the Sergeant wasn't watching closely. We learned how to handle rifles and do the Manual of Arms with ancient Enfield rifles, but there weren't enough to go around and some guys always had to use phoney guns made from wood. We had many gas mask drills, parades and evening Retreat formations.

The weather was quite variable - some days so hot that our wool uniforms were quickly drenched with perspiration and other days cold enough to wear long Johns and gloves while marching. Often we were caught by sudden Florida showers without our raincoats and were quickly drenched to the skin.

I had to serve on Guard Duty four different times, generally four hours on and four hours off for a 24 hour period. Most of the time we simply paced back and forth for four hours in front of one of the hotel entrances. It seemed, and was, sort of silly, but I suppose it was the only way to teach new recruits the responsibility of being on military guard.

We were required to attend what seemed like an endless series of Air Force training films and lectures by Non-coms and Officers. As one would expect, some of these were interesting and some were terribly boring. The lectures were generally given out-of-doors while most of the films were shown in downtown commercial theaters which the Air Force took over during the morning. I listed all of these in my journal and have summarized the subject matter below:

Purpose of the War	Duties of a Soldier	Basic Mathematics
Aerial Gunnery	Government Insurance	War Bonds
Articles of War	Military Courtesy	Sex and V.D.
Swimming	Exterior Guard Duty	First Aid
Interior Guard Duty	Aircraft Construction	General Orders
Screening Smokes	Poison Gas Defense	Incendiaries
Army Organization	Aircraft Identification	Why We Fight
Air Force Ordnance	Ammunition Storage	Citizenship
Concealment & Camouflage	Cal. 50 Machinegun	Small Arms Care

In my spare time I also had to get a "G.I." haircut, for which I waited in line 90 minutes. I was assigned to K.P. three times during basic training and learned to "fly the China Clipper", which, of course, was the mechanical dishwasher. That was the next to worst job on K.P., heavy, terribly hot work with almost no time to rest. The worst job by far was cleaning pots and pans, which were very large, both in size and quantity, and all had to be washed by hand.

We learned to dig foxholes and slit trenches, which is easier said than done in Florida sand! By mid-March we had completed our shots for tetanus and typhoid and had been issued our Air Force insignia. I had also received my first Army pay - a magnificent \$ 10.00. I used part of it to buy some souvenirs to send to Mother, Dad and Barb. On 13 March we were ordered to change to our summer khaki uniforms which we called "suntans". The Army always changed Class A uniforms on a specific date, regardless of current weather conditions.

In between training sessions and drill we had to take additional classification tests, mostly in math and mechanical aptitude. I thought they were surprisingly simple, but few others agreed. After completing all the tests we had our final classification interviews. After looking at my test scores the Captain who interviewed me suggested strongly that I apply for Officer Candidate School. I declined because I had no real desire to be a "90 day Wonder" and I thought that going to O.C.S. would probably reduce my chances for getting in a combat Air Group. He tried to get me to change my mind but finally said I could have my choice of Aircraft Mechanic, Radio or Armament schools. I had asked for the Photography School at Lowry Field but he said there were no openings available at that time. I had no strong

interest in Radio and I knew Mother did not want me to become a mechanic, so, by the process of elimination, I elected to go to Armament School. Besides, that sounded interesting and would give me the chance to work on planes.

One thing I sorely missed during Basic Training was the opportunity to know what was going on in the War. Without a radio I was completely out of touch and I regretted being unable to continue the War log I had kept for over a year. Once in a while I would come upon a LIFE magazine in the day room which always had some good war coverage. We received very little time off but when I did get a pass I walked into town and went to a movie, primarily to see the newsreel.

Shortly after I had arrived at St. Pete I came down with what I thought was a bad cold, but it was apparently a more serious bug. I felt lousy and had a fever for several days. Then I developed an earache which stayed with me off and on for most of the time I was there. At first I was reluctant to go on sick call but finally did after I became more and more worried about having a bad infection. It was the same ear which had been operated on in '32 and by the time I went on sick call it had started to drain. The A.F. Doctor, a young Captain, said it was nothing to worry about, and that it would clear up in a week or so. He gave me a couple aspirin and returned me to duty. I never went back on sick call, even though my ear continued to cause me pain and discomfort and was a source of constant worry all during basic training. It probably did not help that I was not eating well. In those days I was sort of a picky eater and I just hadn't gotten used to Army food. We often had to stand in line for 45 minutes at the mess hall and lots of times I felt it just wasn't worth the effort, so I simply skipped a lot of meals. Besides, I had been receiving packages from Mother and my Aunt Esther shortly after I had been able to tell them my location. Those packages contained lots of cookies and even cupcakes, which, with a pint of milk, often served as my supper.

By the latter part of March I was beginning to get used to the Army, though I still had periods of real homesickness. I still had the same crummy roommates and one thing I hadn't gotten used to was their foul language and amorality. All my life I had been sheltered from the more coarse aspects of life. I was taught the Victorian virtues of honesty, courtesy and morality - especially respect for women. I don't recall ever hearing my Father utter a word of profanity in my presence. The subject of sex was never addressed in our house, though growing up on a farm one couldn't help observing something about the facts of life. My parents could never bring themselves to tell me about the birds and bees, though Mother did slip a small booklet on the subject into my suitcase before I left home. In any event, I had a lot to learn and hear when I entered the army and it took some time to get used to it. It would not take long before I, too, had acquired a fairly respectable Army vocabulary!

On Sunday, 28 March I was placed on shipping orders for the following day - my Basic Training was over. I was given instructions and issued a second set of leggings and seven Air Force shoulder patches. My destination was 618-A, whatever that meant, though I fully expected to

go to the Armament School in Denver. I was roused out at 0200 on Monday morning, simply because the rest of my Squadron was on K.P. that day. I turned in my bedding, packed my bags and dressed in the usual Class A wool uniform for travel. I was instructed to carry my overcoat, blouse, mess kit, toilet articles and, of course, my gas mask. And then, in the time-honored Army custom of "hurry up and wait" I waited - and waited - and waited. We finally entrained at 1830! This troop train would be better than the last. We had honest-to-goodness Pullmans, albeit a bit old, with three men to a compartment. There was a real toilet and plenty of hot and cold water, and even a porter to make up the beds! This was really living, except that we still had the usual cattle-car Army kitchen, instead of a diner.

The train rumbled north during the night, passing through Atlanta and Chattanooga. In the morning, during a brief stopover in Nashville, the Red Cross passed out coffee and cookies. The meals on the train were reasonably good, considering the very adverse conditions under which they were prepared. During the night we crossed the Mississippi River at St. Louis and I was very disappointed not to have seen it. Never having been west of Ohio, I was very impressed with the flat, treeless, almost unpopulated land which we passed through in the Plains States. On Thursday, 1 April, we were in Colorado and about noon we detrained at our destination, Buckley Field, near Denver. We were trucked to the field, issued bedding, given instructions, assigned to a barracks and promptly required to scrub it down from end to end.

ARMAMENT SCHOOL

We had no assigned duty on our first day at Buckley. I took advantage of the time to send my uniform to the base cleaner, get a haircut, and polish my shoes. I also picked up a book of 10 tickets to the base movie theater for \$ 1.20. I was pleased to discover that there was an excellent P.X. (meaning Post Exchange, a hangover, I suppose, from Army frontier days) on the field. The following day we all took a physical examination for aerial gunnery school. I passed everything but the vision test, and so qualified for overseas duty but not gunnery school. On Sunday we were officially welcomed to Buckley Field by the C.O. at the base theater. The following day, 5 April, we started our Armament class work.

Generally, mornings were assigned for routine things like drilling, calisthenics, gas mask drills, obstacle courses, squadron duty and barracks cleanup. The actual class work started right after lunch, ran all afternoon, with ten minute breaks each hour, and then resumed after supper with an evening session until 2200. Our first assignment was to learn all about the Browning Caliber 50 aerial machine gun. We had to memorize the names of each of the 175 parts, learn how to strip it down completely, then re-assemble it, eventually while blindfolded.

I had scarcely gotten started in class when, the evening of 6 April, I suddenly became very ill with a high fever. The following day I tried to remain on duty but by mid-afternoon I could hardly stand up and had to go on sick call. With a fever of 104 degrees I was immediately put in an ambulance and sent to the base hospital. That night my right ear again began to drain - obviously it was a flare-up of the same infection I had in St. Pete, only this time much worse. I was sent to a specialist in the E.N.T. clinic, a young Captain who seemed to know his business. He immediately put me on one of the new Sulfa drugs to combat the infection. I went to the clinic every day and after about four days my fever abated. I was extremely worried about my ear but I never told my parents that I was in the hospital. I tried to be cheerful in my letters, even though I surely didn't feel that way. While in the hospital, I received from my Aunt Esther (Essie) a nice G.E. portable radio. I was delighted with it, as I had greatly missed being able to keep up with world news. It was not a portable in the sense of today's radios, since it used vacuum tubes and four large, heavy "A" and "B" batteries. It was about the size and weight of a typewriter.

By the third week of April my ear was much improved and by the latter part of the month I knew I was getting better when I was assigned to light K.P. work in the hospital kitchen. I was finally released from the hospital on 2 May and assigned to a new barracks on the other side of the field. Though still rather weak, I had to carry all my gear over there, making two trips. The E.M. barracks at the newer bases, such as Buckley Field, were long, narrow single story wood-framed buildings covered on the outside simply with tarpaper. Inside double-deck bunks were lined up along each wall. At one end was the latrine and at the other a separate, private room where the resident C.Q. (the Non-com, usually a Corporal or Sergeant, in Charge of Quarters) lived.

In the center of the building were three or four coal-burning space heater stoves. At older, longer established bases most barracks were two-story buildings, with the second floor exactly like the first.

On Monday, 3 May, I started my Armament classes again. The first couple days were easy, as I had already had that subject matter. I continued with the normal training/class schedule, except that I was excused from doing the obstacle course for a couple weeks and had to return to the clinic for check-ups once a week for three weeks. In my spare time I went to the P.X. or base theater, polished shoes, sewed on my shoulder patches, etc. I really enjoyed having the radio. We usually received one day off each week and I sometimes went in to Denver via bus and streetcar. It was a very nice city and the people were surprisingly friendly to Servicemen.

One of the new drills we had was a gas mask drill with real gas. We went to a large building where we put our masks on "by the numbers" before entering. After standing around for a while in the building we were told to take our masks off. The building was filled with tear gas and we quickly found ourselves rushing for the exit! A gas mask was a very uncomfortable thing to wear but this little exercise demonstrated its potential value in a very effective way. In class we went from the Cal. 50 machine gun to the Cal. 30 (which, by comparison, seemed like a toy) then to the 20mm cannon and, finally, the 37mm cannon, which had 200 parts to memorize. One time we were sent to the malfunction range where nine Cal. 50 machineguns were set up to fire at a target with real ammunition. Each gun had deliberately been bugged by removing a part or installing a damaged part so that it would jam or misfire. Every student had to fire each gun, and determine exactly what the malfunction was and correct it. I found it rather easy and was most impressed by the noise those guns made!

We also had lectures on the old Springfield rifle and went to the rifle range where each man fired 20 rounds at a standard target at 200 yards. I had often engaged in target practice at home with a .22 rifle with Mother and Dad, so firing the Springfield was nothing new for me, except for the recoil, and I scored 80 out of 100, the highest in my class. I was truly surprised at the number of soldiers who had never fired any sort of gun and were actually very apprehensive about it.

The weather at this time in Colorado was very unsettled and we had combinations of rain, snow and sleet all through May. The ground was usually very muddy and it was rather cold most of the time. We usually had inspections on Saturday mornings, in the time-honored Army manner. On 22 May we were inspected by the Base Commander, Gen. Lawton, and we really prepared for that one!

In mid-May I was promoted to Private First Class (as were all other students who had not gotten into any trouble) and was paid \$ 20.00. Up to that time I had been paid only \$ 10.00 in three months. We finally finished our class work at Buckley on 22 May and on Monday the 24th we were loaded on large horse vans (perhaps from the Cavalry?) and moved to nearby Lowry Field for the advanced Armament School.

At Lowry Field we were immediately assigned to the K.P. Squadron and marched to our barracks. We were not issued any sort of bedding. There were two rather soiled blankets on each cot and that was all. We assumed we would be on K.P. just one or two days - little did we realize it would last a full week! For some reason, I escaped K.P. the first day, but was placed on barracks detail, instead. However, on the 26th I was assigned to "C" shift K.P. We started at 1700 and worked all night until we were relieved at 0600 in the morning. The base was on an around-the-clock training schedule and so, of course, were the mess halls. I was on K.P. every night Wednesday through Sunday. One night I had a comparatively easy job, but every other night I worked on the China Clipper. The next Monday, the 31st, I had barely gotten to bed after K.P. when they rolled us out to be assigned to a new barracks to start our advanced training. We were finally issued bedding, plus a pillow, mattress and pair of rubber overshoes, after which we went to a theater to receive the usual welcoming and orientation lectures. Our actual training at Lowry started on Tuesday, 1 June. Again I was assigned to the night, or "C" shift.

Our routine schedule was to roll out at 1000 for calisthenics and drill in the morning, followed by lunch. It was hard to get used to since we would have breakfast at 0100, just before going to bed and then get nothing to eat after rising, until lunch time. After lunch we had a one hour session each day on aircraft recognition. We had to be able to quickly identify the silhouettes of all current Allied and Axis military aircraft. This was really a snap for me because of my long time interest in aviation - I could already identify virtually every aircraft in the sky, both military and civilian. On quizzes I always got the highest score in my class and almost never missed. We had tests wherein slides of various planes were quickly flashed on a screen and we had to write down the make and model of the plane. After the A.C. recognition class we had free time until after supper, when our Armament classes began at 1830. These classes lasted till 0030 when we went to the mess hall for our 0100 breakfast.

The subjects we studied in class included the following:

Wiring & electrical circuits	Bomb racks
Gas warfare	Bomb shackles
Bombs & fuzes	Aerial torpedoes
Explosives & ammunition	Hydraulics
A-2 Bomb release	A-1 Arming device
Sperry gun sight	Sperry ball turret
Sperry upper turret	Martin upper turret
Consolidated tail turret	Ammunition belting

The classes were usually in the form of lectures and demonstrations, with occasional training films. Oral and written quizzes were given almost every session. I was so impressed and interested in the powered gun turrets that I requested to be sent to the special turret school after I finished at Lowry. I was sure I could get the assignment because of my high grades, but that was not to be.

My high school Graduation Day was on 3 June, though, of course, I could not be there. I was graduated with honors and was Valedictorian

of my class. Barbara, who was a Junior, stood in for me and collected my diploma, certificates and other awards - she told me she made several trips to the stage on my behalf. The following day was my birthday and I received gifts from home and from Essie. It all made me a bit homesick, something I thought I was well over. As a sort of gift from the Air Force we were issued footlockers that same day - a great improvement over living out of barracks bags.

We were given one day off each week and mine was Saturday. My first pass was on the 12th and I went to Denver where I went to the Telenews theater and then to two regular movies. I also had a very nice restaurant meal. Sometimes I went to an amusement park near Denver called Lakeside, where I went on the various rides. One Saturday two other fellows and I went on a train excursion from Moffat Station. The train went about 75 miles up into the Rockies, going through 31 tunnels on the way. To one from the mid-west it was a marvelous experience - the beauty of the mountains was beyond anything I had ever experienced. My only regret was that I had no camera to record the trip. I had not taken my Argus with me into the service because cameras were not allowed on training bases. This train trip cost all of \$ 1.45.

My back pay finally caught up with me on 16 June when I received \$ 112.73 in cash. It was the most money I had ever had at one time in my life and I sent most of it home to my parents. Towards the end of the month I received an additional \$ 47.50 so I no longer had to count every penny.

During the last half of June we frequently went on cross-country hikes of up to seven miles in place of having callsthenics every morning. This was in preparation for our final exercise at Denver. We finished Armament School on 4 July and were issued musette packs and harnesses, a horrid piece of equipment, probably leftover from 1918. All soldiers who finished at Lowry had to go on a one-week field exercise at a place called Camp Bizerte, located some distance from Denver - exactly where, I never knew. On 5 July trucks loaded us and our gear and headed for the location of our field exercises. We were dropped off with full packs seven miles from the camp and hiked the rest of the way. Upon arrival we were assigned to a bivouac area where we pitched our tents and camouflaged them with vegetation. By current backpacking standards, these tents were really terrible. Each soldier carried one "shelter half", one tent pole and two wool G.I. blankets. Two men connected their shelter halves together at the ridge and pitched them as a sort of pup tent without floor or insect netting. They tended to leak at the joined ridge line and provided very little protection from a driving rain. We had no sleeping pads of any sort, and found the ground rather hard! We also found that this area was heavily populated with an unusually vicious species of ant.

We ate from a field kitchen, using mess kits which were cleaned by scrubbing well with sand. Water was trucked in and placed in Lister bags and was purified with iodine, which made it taste rather bad.

Our schedule at Camp Bizerte was quite full. We learned how to fuze and load 500 and 1000 pound bombs, using a wrecked B-25 fuselage as

a test facility. We fired Enfields at the rifle range twice, the second time for the record. I qualified as Marksman the first time. We also fired Carbines and Thompson sub-machineguns at the range. One day we practiced camouflaging a wrecked B-24 bomber - something we never had to do again, even overseas. And, of course, there was the usual calisthenics, close order drill, manual of arms, obstacle courses and even K.P. in the field kitchen. One night we were treated to a concert by the Lowry Air Force Band which was very enjoyable.

There was often talk about rattlesnakes, though I don't think anyone ever saw one in the camp. One night about midnight there was an awful scream near our tent and I heard several cries of "snake, snake!" Two guys had jumped out of their sacks taking the tent with them down the slope. It turned out that a couple jokers had placed a hemp rope under their neighbors' tent in a curved form and then started pulling on it about midnight, giving, apparently, the sensation of a large snake moving under the tent. A little comedy always helps.

Camp Bizerte was located on the edge of what looked like a dry river bed. It was, in fact, an arroyo and one day after we had been having a light rain we were amazed to see a wall of roaring, muddy water come rushing down that dry bed. It was so strong that it took out our Army bridge and washed away a bunch of mess supplies. At that time I had never heard of such a thing and was completely astounded as to where such a flood of water could have come from without warning.

On the 12th of July we broke camp and hiked out to the highway where trucks returned us to Lowry Field. The next day we were formally graduated from Armament School and received our diplomas and Armorer's sleeve patches. But Lowry was not yet through with us, for on the next day we all pulled 12 hours of K.P.

On 15 July we entrained at 1030 for Salt Lake City Air Base. This was the best troop train shipment I experienced in the Army. We not only had Pullman sleepers, but regular dining cars, as well, and our route took us straight across the Rockies with the most magnificent views one could hope for. The following day we detrained at Salt Lake A.F.B. where we went through a clothing inspection and were given another overseas physical. We were issued some new clothing, pistol belt, helmet liner, the infamous musette bag and harness, two wool blankets, a shelter half with pole and pegs, a first aid pouch, canteen and a new barracks bag. Then we were assigned to barracks and had chow.

The following day we were placed on shipping alert, but had little to do other than police our barracks area and stand Retreat that evening. The term, "police" has nothing to do with security, of course, but simply means clean up. When policing an area we went by the old Army slogan, "If it moves, salute it; if it doesn't move, pick it up; if you can't pick it up, paint it!"

On Sunday, the 18th I was on K.P. all day, but it was the easiest I had ever pulled - the work wasn't too hard and the food was very good. The next day saw the usual routine of calisthenics, drill and a run over the obstacle course. I was scheduled to ship out on the 20th, so I dressed in my Class A O.D.'s packed my bags and hauled them to the